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Report of the Committee on State Government on the Feasibility of Establishing a State Department of Housing and Community Development : (pursuant to H.P. 2004)

Maine State Legislature

Committee on State Government

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STATE OF MAINE

ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

[Joint Standing] COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

October 31, 1978

Legislative Council
108th Legislature
State House
Augusta, Maine 04333

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Members of the Council:

In accordance with H.P. 2004, an Order directing the Committee on State Government to study the feasibility of establishing a State Department of Housing and Community Development, we enclose the final report of the Committee.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Donald F. Collins in cursive.

Senator Donald Collins, Senate Chairman

Handwritten signature of Peter J. Curran in cursive.

Representative Peter Curran, House Chairman

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REPORT OF
THE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT
ON
THE FEASIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING
A STATE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING
AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
(PURSUANT TO H.P. 2004)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
I. Background-----	1
II. Recommendations-----	2
III. Appendices	
A. Appendix 1 -- H.P. 2004, which authorized the study-----	3

BACKGROUND

The purpose of this study has been to determine the feasibility of establishing a State Department of Housing and Community Development (see Appendix 1 for the text of the Study Order, H.P. 2004).

The Committee Chairmen appointed a Subcommittee to do preliminary work on the study and to report to the full Committee. The members of the subcommittee were Senators Collins (Chairman) and Martin; and Representatives Kany, Bachrach, Valentine, Churchill, and Stubbs.

A public hearing of the subcommittee was held in Augusta on August 30, 1978. Public notice of the hearing was given, and in addition notices were sent to representatives of Federal, State, local, and special district governments; association of housing builders and manufacturers and of housing financiers; and other private organizations, including the Maine Municipal Association. Twelve persons testified at the hearing and 2 additional persons sent written statements to the subcommittee after the hearing.

The testimony and statements are summarized below:

1. No person testified in favor of the creation of a State Department of Housing and Community Affairs. There was no support for the creation of any new department.
2. There was testimony in favor of improving the coordination of and the availability of information on State programs of housing and community development, with specific suggestions to:
 - a. Assign to a new or existing Legislative Committee the responsibility for all Bills having to do with housing and community development
 - b. Establish in the Executive branch a focal point for persons and organizations outside the Executive Branch to obtain information on housing and community development; this focal point might be an individual or a very small organization, which should in any event have very good access to the Governor.

The subcommittee presented a summary of the hearing to the full Committee, which directed preparation of this report.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1 -- The Committee does not recommend the creation of a State department of Housing and Community Development. There has been no indication to the Committee of support, and the Committee knows of no compelling reason, for the creation of such a department.

Recommendation 2 -- The Committee recommends that one Committee be selected for reference of all Bills having to do with housing and community development. The Committee believes that, because such legislation is important and often highly technical, one Committee ought to handle it. This will permit assigning to such a Committee Legislators with an interest and expertise in the subject area, and will provide a better opportunity for communication for non-Legislators. The Committee believes that the 109th Legislature should make the decision as to whether this assignment should be to a new or existing Committee.

Recommendation 3 -- The Committee recommends designation in the Executive Branch of a person or persons responsible for providing information on housing and community development to people and organizations needing such information. The Subcommittee was told that it is often difficult to obtain information on housing and community development programs. The Committee believes that it is important to be able to obtain such information with ease, and that the best way to do this is to designate a person or persons within an agency as the provider of such information. Further, the provider should have good access to the Governor to assure in turn that he, the provider is able to get the information which he is expected to provide. Therefore, the Committee recommends: (1) that the next Governor designate that a named position within the State Planning Office be responsible for this information activity; (2) that the Governor require all State agencies to cooperate with the designee as requested; and (3) that a well publicized announcement be made of the designation.

APPENDIX 1

H.P. 2004, WHICH
AUTHORIZED THE STUDY

THE TEXT OF HOUSE PAPER 2004:

(4-4) On Motion of Mr. CAREY of Waterville, the following Joint Order: (H. P. 2004) (Cosponsor: Mr. CURRAN of South Portland)

Whereas, at the present time, many Maine communities are undertaking housing and community development projects involving housing and urban development and other federal agency funding; and

Whereas, there are approximately 80 different state agencies in the area of housing and community development; and

Whereas, the lack of coordination among these agencies presents problems in providing effective and efficient state assistance in this area; now, therefore, be it

Ordered, the Senate concurring, that the Joint Standing Committee on State Government shall study the feasibility of establishing a State Department of Housing and Community Development to include those agencies currently involved in providing services and financial assistance in the areas of housing and community development and to study any other alternative means of reorganizing those agencies; and be it further

Ordered, that those agencies directly affected by the study shall provide to the Joint Standing Committee on State Government staff assistance necessary to complete this study; and be it further

Ordered, that the committee shall complete this study no later than December 1, 1978, and submit to the Legislative Council within the same time period its findings and recommendations, including copies of any recommended legislation in final draft form; and be it further

Ordered, upon passage in concurrence, that a suitable copy of this Order shall be forwarded to the members of the committee.
